The Rip Tide

The Bi-monthly E-newsletter of the New Hampshire Coastal Program May 2006

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News

Project Partners Celebrate Awcomin Marsh Restoration

Ribbon Cutting Event Marks the End of Nearly Six Years of Work

About 50 people gathered in the morning fog at Awcomin Marsh in Rye on Saturday, April 15 to celebrate the restoration of approximately 30 acres of salt marsh and the opening of public access on the site. Executive Councilor Ruth Griffin did the honors of cutting the ribbon across the entrance of one of two new viewing platforms.

The event included keynote speakers from several of the organizations in this joint effort, including Ted Diers, NHCP manager, Alan Ammann of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Liz Chamberlain, representing Senator John Sununu, and Matt Leahy, representing Senator Judd Gregg.

The completed restoration project comes as a result of nearly six years of planning and construction work. Project partners removed the equivalent of 9,000 dump trucks of fill from the marsh and created a new tidal creek system and open water habitat. The new mile long channel was large enough to warrant an official name, and was named Duddy Stream, in memory of local conservationist Robert Duddy. Many members of the Duddy family were at the celebration.

In addition to the restoration work, a boardwalk and two viewing platforms now provide recreational opportunities and access to this delicate ecosystem with minimal impact to the marsh.

Project partners include the town of Rye, NHCP, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, University of New Hampshire, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ducks Unlimited, New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development, Corporate Restoration Wetlands Partnership, Conservation Law Foundation and Jacques Whitford.

Councilor Ruth Griffin cuts ribbon to officially announce completion of the Awcomin Marsh project. Jim Raynes, Rye Conservation Commission chair, looks on.

Salt marshes provide critical plant and animal habitat, offer flood protection for adjacent uplands, and produce fish and shellfish for recreational and commercial harvesters. Most New England salt marshes have been degraded either by tidal restrictions, such as roads and dikes that cut-off access to the natural process of tidal flushing, or by digging ditches into the peat to drain standing water from the marsh surface. Salt marsh restoration can help decrease mosquito populations because restoring tidal flushing increases open water habitat, home to fish who feast on mosquito larvae.

The Awcomin Marsh Access Point is located in Rye off of Route 1A, across the street from the Rye Boat Launch. Parking is along the road or in the parking lot of the Rye Boat Launch.

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Local Conservationist Alan Ammann Receives National Award

Alan Ammann, wetlands conservationist, once convinced a North Hampton resident to temporarily move his vacation home to allow the installation of two culverts under Route 1A to restore tidal flow to the 180-acre Little River Salt Marsh.

Alan Ammann, wetlands conservationist

Ammann, from Lee, N.H., is one of six national winners of the 2006 National Wetlands Awards, given annually in recognition for on-the-ground wetland conservation efforts. A panel of wetland experts at the Environmental Law Institute in March selected the awardees. Ted Diers, Coastal Program manager, nominated Ammann for his unwavering commitment to salt marsh restoration.

"I consider Alan to be important not only to restoration in New Hampshire, but also to me personally. He has been a mentor to me as I have worked on restoration projects over the years. His award is a celebration of all of the restoration successes that communities and agencies have worked so hard to achieve," said Diers.

Just like convincing someone to move their home, Ammann's determination has moved agencies to fund and support vital restoration projects.

"It takes time, sometimes years, to bring some people around to accepting a project. Patience is the key. That is why I never give up on a project in the face of skeptics," Ammann said.

In the early 1990s, Ammann spearheaded a project to inventory all of the potentially restorable salt marshes in New Hampshire. The resulting document, a catalog of available projects, jump-started interest and enthusiasm among coastal towns and other agencies. Most of the ensuing restoration projects were a direct result of the inventory. Ammann's pioneering work also includes developing a new method for the evaluation of nontidal wetlands in New Hampshire.

Ammann is most proud of initiating a multi-agency approach to restoration. For example, during this coming year, invasive plants like common reed and common buckthorn, which take over large areas where native plants normally thrive, will be removed from four properties in the coastal zone through a unique partnership initiated by Ammann. The removal work brings together the funding and technical expertise of more than 10 partners, including nonprofits, municipalities and agencies.

During Ammann's 28-year career with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, he worked in Pennsylvania and all of the New England States in a variety of roles, including soil conservationist, wildlife biologist and water quality specialist. However, he feels a special tie to New Hampshire's wetlands, and New Hampshire is his adopted home state.

Ammann cites Aldo Leopod, naturalist and writer, and Miyamoto Musashi, Japan's greatest samurai, as the biggest influences on his work. Mushashi said that when engaged in a duel, one should clear your mind of all distraction, and this is the mindset Ammann takes when working on a project.

The winners of the National Wetland Awards are from all regions of the country and exemplify the extraordinary commitment and innovation that is so instrumental to conserving wetlands.

Program co-sponsors—the Environmental Law Institute, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Federal Highway Administration, and NOAA Fisheries—hope that recognizing wetland leaders for their efforts will inspire others to follow their example. Given the national importance of wetlands, the federal agencies that sponsor the awards welcome the opportunity to recognize and encourage voluntary wetland conservation efforts.

"Effective conservation and stewardship of our natural resources is vital. The involvement of private individuals, such as these extraordinary people, is critical to assure that clean water and quality wetlands

are available for future generations," commented Dale N. Bosworth, Chief of the USDA Forest Service.

Collectively, the award winners have conserved thousands of wetland acres and have mobilized hundreds of other individuals to contribute to wetland conservation. On May 10, they will take a well-deserved break from their efforts to receive their awards at a ceremony on Capitol Hill.

"The most satisfying thing about this award is that all the people involved in these restoration projects can feel that what they are doing has been recognized as having national significance. This really should have been a group award. And I plan to accept it as if it had been," said Ammann.

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Derelict Dams Block Fish Migration and Harm Water Quality

By David Deen
Connecticut River Watershed Council

When you read or hear articles about dams it seems that people have all kinds of feelings about them. Some say, "Gee the dam has always been there, why not keep it?" or "What about all that silt behind the dam, won't it smell and look ugly if the dam is removed?" or "Doesn't the old dam help stop flood waters?" These are myths and do not balance the scales between the value to society and the harm to the river caused by these derelict dams.

Why are dams, big or small, bad for rivers? Dams block the migration of fish upstream as they try to reach spawning habitat. Mistakenly, people think only of anadromous fish like the Atlantic salmon when they think of migrating fish. All species of trout and several species of bass migrate from larger rivers to smaller tributaries to search out the right habitat for successful spawning. Dams that block their migration diminish the ability of nature to stock our streams with our resident fish.

The biggest negative impact all dams have on water quality is allowing the sun to heat up the water held in the reservoir. The problem is that as the temperature of water increases, the levels of dissolved oxygen decline. It is a simple matter of the physical properties of water and oxygen. Not only can low levels of dissolved oxygen stress or kill all of the aquatic species in the reservoir, but also the water that flows through the dam can affect the river itself for miles downstream.

What about the myths mentioned earlier? Do you end up with big mud flats that smell after a dam is removed? Over the last decade dam removals have taken place all over America and the real life experience shows that those mud flats turn into natural riparian zones with plants and wildlife in as little as one growing season.

Bellamy River Dam, Dover, as it appeared in 1935. In November, 2004 this head-of-the tide dam was removed through a cooperative public-private effort, which included NHCP. Fish populations suffered prior to the dam's removal.

How about helping stop floodwaters? Remnant dams not only don't help stop flood waters; they become dangerous as they age. Trapped silt behind the structure not only covers and destroys the open cobble habitat on the bottom of the river that all aquatic species need to survive, but the silt is using up space behind the dam leaving virtually no flood storage capacity. If water flows over the top of a dam during normal flow conditions, there is no flood

storage capacity. Communities have found that removing old dams has actually eased flooding conditions, especially during ice out events because the river flows more naturally.

Old dams can do damage even if they cannot store floodwaters. Even old dams still hold significant amounts of water behind them, and as dams deteriorate the odds increase that they will collapse under the stress of high water.

Dam building in New England began with the arrival of Europeans, but most have been constructed since 1850. Few rivers or streams regardless of their size have escaped dam building. Now that our power sources have moved away from direct waterpower, only a handful of these dams serve any economic, safety or social function. So as you think about neglected dams, consider the damage any dam does to the river ecosystem. Unless the dam has an important economic or social function, remove the dam. If you do, you end up with a healthier river and you won't be worried about the dam giving way the next time we have high water in our rivers.

David L. Deen, river steward for the Connecticut River Watershed Council, an organization that has been an articulate voice for the Connecticut River for more than half a century.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

NHCP Announces New Public Notice Website Page

Find out about the latest public comment opportunities on federal consistency applications, proposed changes to NHCP rules and draft NHCP plans on our new public notice website page at www.des.nh.gov/Coastal/PublicNotices.html. The purpose of the notices is, in part, to fulfill the public notification obligations required by the federal consistency regulations.

The Coastal Program is also posting the public notices in *The Portsmouth Herald* on a monthly basis. They generally appear on the first Friday of each month.

NHCP Offers Volunteer Opportunities This Summer

Marsh monitors set a fish net.

Get your hands dirty while learning about salt marsh ecology and gathering scientific data!

From June through August, trained volunteers collect information on salinity, groundwater levels, vegetation, and fish populations at salt marsh restoration sites in New Hampshire. The goal of the project is to track the changes in salt marsh ecology after restoration takes place. The data is used by resource managers throughout New England to make decisions about restoration. No scientific experience is necessary to participate.

For more information about NHMM and how to get involved visit: www.des.nh.gov/factsheets/cp/cp-10.html, or contact Beth Lambert

at (603) 559-0022 or blambert@des.state.nh.us To view training dates and times for new monitors, visit www.des.nh.gov/asp/DESCalendar/default.asp?theMonth=Jun06 Choose between Session One or Session Two.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – NOAA Partnership Announces Marine Debris Grants Program

The Marine Debris Grants Program provides grants to organizations working on projects to improve our understanding of the impacts of marine debris on our marine and coastal resources, and to reduce and prevent debris in our marine environment. The program provides competitive grants to finance creative and innovative proposals that seek to work with marinas, ports, and the fishing industry to significantly reduce the occurrence of debris in these areas. In addition, the program is accepting research proposals that address the biological, social or economic impact of marine debris on species, habitat, and coastal businesses. Specific marine debris focus areas include:

- Clean Ports and Marinas – Projects that look to create or improve best management practices of ports and marinas to decrease the threat of marine debris to marine life and navigational safety.
- Clean Oceans – Projects that work with the fishing industry and/or fisheries councils and organizations to develop better solutions to reduce derelict fishing gear in the marine environment.
- Marine Debris Research – Projects that improve understanding of the sources and impacts of marine debris on marine mammals, sensitive habitats, tourist and fishing industries, and navigational safety.

Eligible applicants include institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, and state and local governments whose projects have the potential to benefit NOAA trust resources through marine debris research and prevention projects. Submit a pre-proposal via the Foundation's online pre-proposal application by June 1, 2006. If, after careful review of these guidelines, you have additional questions, please contact Michelle Pico at pico@nfwf.org or (262)-567-0601. View the complete request and application instructions at www.nfwf.org/programs/marine_debris.cfm.

U.S. Senate Committee Passes Coastal and Estuarine Land Protection Act

In mid-March the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation passed S. 1215, the *Coastal and Estuarine Land Protection Act*, with a substitute amendment. The substitute amendment contains some changes relating to well-managed forests and allowing non-governmental organizations to hold title to match properties. Prior to the mark-up, Coastal Program Manager Ted Diers submitted testimony supporting the legislation.

S. 1215, introduced by Senator Gregg on June 9, 2005, would authorize the CELP program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration at a level of $60 million annually for the coming four years. Currently, the program is funded on a year-to-year basis. Since 2002, the program has protected close to 3,000 acres of New Hampshire land critical to water quality protection, wildlife habitat, and public recreational access.

Soon, a coastal watershed-wide plan will be required to nominate coastal land conservation projects to receive CELP funding. NHCP currently has a partnership with the The Nature Conservancy, New Hampshire Estuaries Project, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, and the Strafford and Rockingham Regional Planning Commissions to create a plan and process that will be used to identify New Hampshire projects eligible

for CELP funding for fiscal year 2008. The plan assesses and prioritizes conservation needs in New Hampshire's coastal watershed and is slated to be complete this June.

A public info session on the plan will take place on May 22 at the Newington Town Hall. For more info, visit www.des.nh.gov/asp/DESCalendar/default.asp?theMonth=May06

National Clean Beaches Week Campaign Coming Soon

The Clean Beaches Council, a nonprofit dedicated to raising awareness about beach sustainability, has contacted the governors in all 30 coastal states to sign a proclamation declaring June 29– July 5, 2006 Clean Beaches Week. Last year, Governor Lynch signed the proclamation, and it is anticipated to happen again this year. In preparation, several New Hampshire organizations are planning beach cleanups to celebrate this national event.

As Clean Beaches Week approaches, check the DES Calendar of Events listings for June and July to find out what's happening at www.des.nh.gov/asp/DESCalendar/. For more background information visit: www.cleanbeaches.org/events/cbw/

Calendar of Events Available on Website

Current events are regularly posted on the online Calendar of Events at www.des.nh.gov/asp/DESCalendar/. Check the Calendar of Events frequently to find new postings. The following are upcoming events of particular interest to coastal folks.

- **Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds Public Info Session, May 22**

Go to May 22 for more details.

- **Exeter River Alewife Festival, June 3**

Go to June 3 for more details.

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NEW PUBLICATIONS & PLANNING TOOLS

Sanitary Survey Fact Sheet

The Beach Program recently released a new fact sheet, "A Quick Reference Guide to Sanitary Surveys," to assist local decision makers and others in locating potential bacterial pollution sources to surface waters. To learn more, go to www.des.nh.gov/factsheets/wmb/wmb-21.htm

How-to Planning Series Nonpoint Source Pollution

This six-page how-to-guide describes the causes and consequences of nonpoint source pollution in an easy to read format. It also reviews the available resources to help manage nonpoint source pollution.

This is the perfect guide for people trying to educate others about the importance of addressing nonpoint source pollution in New Hampshire's coastal watershed. It can supplement outreach activities or help initiate town officials to the topic.

This is the first in a how-to planning series by the Strafford Regional Planning Commission and partially funded by NHCP. View the guide at www.strafford.org/howto/HOWto_NPS.pdf

Two other guides in the how-to series on how to address nonpoint source pollution will be available soon at www.strafford.org

Guide to Protecting Small Waterways

In an effort to encourage the protection of coastal watersheds, the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) has published "Incorporating Small Streams and Brooks into Developing Landscapes." The 56-page book is a guide to help municipal planners, natural resource professionals, and conservation organizations conserve and protect their river resources as their communities grow and develop. The book sells for $7.95. The unit price is $5 per book for orders of four or more books. To place an order, contact Paul Dest, Wells NERR director, at dest@wellsnerr.org

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About this e-newsletter

The Rip Tide is NHCP's bi-monthly e-newsletter.

All subscribers (e-mail addresses) on this list are kept confidential and are not shared by NHCP.

Contact Cathy Coletti, editor, at (603) 559-0024 with questions or comments.

About NHCP

NHCP's mission is to "balance the preservation of natural resources of the coast with social and economic needs of this and succeeding generations."

NHCP gained federal approval in 1982 under the provisions of the Coastal Zone Management Act, initially for the areas in proximity to the Atlantic shore and the lower Piscataqua River. In 1988, the program added areas bordering the Great Bay and tidal rivers, but only up to the statutory (RSA 482-A) limits for tidal flow. In 2004, the landward boundary was again expanded to encompass the total area of the 17 tidal municipalities.

The map depicts New Hampshire's Coastal Watershed area. The 42 communities that make up the watershed are linked by waterways back to the 17 tidal coastal communities and ultimately to the Gulf of Maine.

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services administers NHCP. NHCP is networked with other state agencies, which help enforce the program's 16 coastal policies and conduct reviews of projects in the New Hampshire coastal zone.